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**SPECIAL MESSAGE
TO THE 93rd MICHIGAN LEGISLATURE
NEW MERIT AWARD SCHOLARSHIP**

To the Members of the 93rd Michigan Legislature:

I am writing pursuant to Section 17 of Article V of the Michigan Constitution of 1963 to urge your adoption of legislation establishing a New Merit Award scholarship before you begin your summer recess. I believe this measure is not only necessary and desirable, it is critical to Michigan's economic future. Enactment of the New Merit Award will send a powerful signal to employers across the country and around the globe—Michigan will have the nation's best educated workforce.

This legislation is a direct response to the central recommendation of the Cherry Commission on Higher Education and Economic Growth—that Michigan must make post-secondary education universal. Students may choose to attend four year colleges and universities, community colleges, or participate in technical training programs, but they must continue their education beyond high school. Their prosperity and Michigan's prosperity depend on it.

The New Merit Award would allow any student who pursues education beyond high school to earn a \$4,000 scholarship, enough to pay for a two year associate degree at a Michigan community college. That means all our children will grow up knowing that they have the resources to get the college degree or technical certification they need to get a good-paying job.

The proposal that resulted from bi-partisan discussions in the Michigan Senate combines the best features of the current Michigan Merit Award scholarship with an approach that also will provide encouragement and financial support to the majority of our students—those who do not qualify for the current Merit Award based solely on standardized test scores. Those students also need to continue their education and must have the opportunity to demonstrate “merit” the way it is defined and valued in the marketplace—through achievement in college and technical training. Proposed legislation to implement this proposal will be transmitted to legislative leaders today.

It was just a few weeks ago that I was able to join with legislative leaders from both parties to sign the historic legislation making our high school graduation requirements among the most rigorous in the nation. We achieved that goal in short order by forgoing partisanship and focusing on Michigan's future. Now that we have taken this step to ensure that all our students are ready for success beyond high school, we must also be prepared to support their aspirations to higher education. The New Merit Award legislation does just that.

Every day action is delayed on the New Merit Award is a day that Michigan is not gaining more ground in the battle for jobs and economic growth.

Respectfully,



Jennifer M. Granholm
Governor